THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Several measures have been taken to simplify the procedures for issuing of passports without any hassles and hindrance. A committee to review the Passport issue system was set up by the Government. As per the recommendations of the Committee the following measures have been taken towards simplification and streamlining of the procedure: (i) issue of passports on the basis of post police verification to senior citizens aged 65 years and above if any of their adult children has a valid passport; (ii) issue of passport without police verification (a) in case of reissue/renewal of passports including issue of duplicate passports in case of loss and issue of additional booklets, (b) to children up-to 15 years of age with at least one of the parents possessing a valid passport, (c) to retired government servants who have held an official or a diplomatic passport while in service and (d) to government servants who produce a 'No Objection Certificate' from their Department. Besides, several other measures to simplify and streamline the procedure for issue of passports are also being implemented. These measures are: (a) introduction of Tatkal Scheme for issue of out-of-trun passport, (b) decentralisation of passport services to enable submission of completed application form at designated speed post centres at district level, (c) provision of dispatch of passport by speed post and (d) submission of passport applications at district level through the offices of District Magistrate/Superintendent of Police.

The Government have also undertaken a major task of modernisation of Passport Offices. This includes (a) computerisation of processing procedures, (b) machine writing of passports, (c) scanning of passport files, (d) dissemination of information on touch-screen kiosks and on the internet, (e) status enquiry on the internet/mobile phone, (f) on-line registeration of passport applications.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) A new Passport Office was opened at Ranchi (Jharkhand) on 24.7.2002. There is a proposal to establish new passport offices at Deharadum (Uttaranchal), Raipur (Chhattisgarh), Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) and Surat (Gujarat).

Rates of accommodation abroad

2409. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH "SURYA": Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any rate has been fixed for accommodation for officers

including Group — A visiting abroad for official purpose like training, attending seminars etc. status-wise;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the criterion adopted by the Mission's abroad for hiring accommodation for officers visiting abroad for official purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) No rates have been fixed for hiring of accommodation in such cases. Instead, panels of approved hotels have been drawn by the Ministry in respect of various capital cities as detailed below at part (c).

(c) Panels of approved hotels have been drawn by the Ministry in respect of various cities. The officer is required to arrange accommodation in a hotel on the approved panel for that particular city and may claim reimbursement of actual expenditure on room rent.

For the cities where an approved panel of hotels is not prescribed, the lowest hotel rate for that particular grade of officers, applicable in the capital city of that country, would be the ceiling for hiring accommodation in hotels in such cities.

Officials going abroad on non-representational visits, such as for attending training courses or seminars, would be entitled to hotel accommodation one step below their normal entitlement.

The entitlement of scale of accommodation to following categories of officials going on official duty abroad would be as under:—

Speaker of Lok Sabha, Cabinet Minister, Minister of State, Deputy Minister of Central Governmment, Speaker of Legislative Assembly	Single suite if travelling alone and double suite if travelling with spouse officially
Chief Ministers, Ministers of State Government	Single suite if travelling alone and double suite if travelling with spouse officially
MPs/MLAs/MLCs	Single room only
Secretaries to the Govt. of India (including those holding non-secretariat post but drawing pay equivalent to that of Secretary to the Govt of India)	Single suite (only if they visit a foreign country as leader of the delegation) otherwise a single room. The entitlement to suite would be on a case to case basis with the prior approval of the competent authority.
Grade I officers and below	Single room only